

Project Core

A Stepping-Up Technology Implementation Grant

Directed by the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at UNC Chapel Hill

Do you know a Jade?

Jade uses a wheelchair for mobility. She works hard to propel herself, demonstrating her desire...

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Universal Core Communication Systems

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Modeling the Universal Core

Importance

Modeling is a powerful way to support communication and language development. Without our models, students who are learning to use the Universal Core will hear spoken language or see sign language, but they will not experience others communicating in a way they can use. Modeling the Universal Core as often as possible is a critical way to help students learn to use symbols to communicate. It is important to begin modeling the use of symbols as soon as possible – even before students communicate with us intentionally, we can attribute meaning to their behaviors (e.g., A child turns away from an activity. We attribute meaning - “you want something different” or “you do not want it.”) and model a symbolic alternative (e.g., Point to different or not on the Universal Core).

Ways to model

The goal of modeling is to encourage symbol use without requiring it. When modeling, be sure to speak at a slow pace and point to or otherwise highlight the symbol until the student sees, or in the case of tactile symbols, feels it. Also, model in ways that match the ways students select symbols to communicate (e.g., pointing, looking at, scanning). The table below offers examples of ways to model.

Situation	Student Behavior	Adult Behavior
During Instruction	Watching or listening to the teacher	Intentionally point to and say words from the Universal Core while teaching.
Student who is not yet using symbols	Student reaches for an item you are holding.	Adult attribute meaning, “I see you reaching.” Then models a symbolic alternative “You could say want . You want it .”
Student uses a single symbol	Student sees an item you are holding and points to the symbol, want .	Adult repeats, “ want ” saying the word while pointing to the symbol, and then expands by saying another word, “want it” while pointing to the symbols.

When to model

Model the Universal Core throughout the day. Make sure systems are always available for adults to model and for students to use. Think broadly about modeling during every day classroom routines (e.g., *go, get, put*) and during academic instruction (e.g., *it, same, different, all, some, what*).

Benefits of modeling

Modeling shows where symbols are located in their core systems and how symbols can be used to communicate various messages. Modeling helps students: (1) understand that their behaviors carry meaning; (2) learn how they can use symbols to communicate more conventionally; and (3) develop language by showing how to expand messages by adding additional symbols.



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The following provides initial guidance to school teams on how to introduce and use the 3D symbols. This document will continue to be revised as a result of ongoing research to further define effective practices. Please visit www.project-core.com for the latest version.

Core Sandwich – GO

First:

Recognize that an activity involves movement that can accurately be represented with GO.

Next:

Place the 3D symbol for GO in one of the student's hands.

Place your hand (palm down) under the student's other hand and sign GO. If you do not have a sign of your own for go, move your hand forward under the student's like you are making a wave-like motion.

Sandwich (link the symbol with the known feeling of moving):

Start GO-ING and stop after a minute or so.

Then:

Remove the symbol GO from the student's hand and place it in the designated area.

Lift the student's hand to brush across the 3D symbol for GO

Help the student pick up and explore the GO symbol

Place your hand (palm down) under the student's non-dominant hand and sign GO.

Place the 3D symbol for GO back in the designated area.

Last:

Tap 2x under wrist.

If the student touches the 3D symbol, respond by putting the symbol in her hand and GO more.

If the student does not touch the 3D symbol and you need to continue GO-ING. Place the symbol in her hand, place your hand (palm down) under the other hand and sign GO. Then GO.

NOTE: The student is not required to use the symbol in order to go. You are teaching the association between the act of going and the 3D symbol. It may be several weeks or months before there have been enough learning opportunities for the student to use the symbol in any meaningful way.



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Core Sandwich - LIKE

First:

Recognize that the student is indicating pleasure about something that is happening/present.

Next:

Place the 3D symbol for LIKE in the student's dominant hand.
Sign LIKE hand under hand in the student's non-dominant hand.

Sandwich (link the symbol with her preference or pleasure in response to an object, activity, sensory input):

Present the preferred object, activity, sensory input while helping the student move her dominant hand with LIKE in it.

Then:

Remove the symbol LIKE from the student's hand and place it in the designated area.
Lift the student's hand to brush across the 3D symbol for LIKE.
Help the student pick up and explore the LIKE symbol.
Sign LIKE hand under hand in the student's non-dominant hand.
Place the 3D symbol for LIKE back in the designated area.

Last:

Tap 2x under wrist.
If the student touches the LIKE symbol, respond by presenting the preferred object, activity, sensory input while helping the student move her dominant hand with LIKE in it.
If the student does not touch the LIKE symbol stop presenting the preferred object, activity, sensory input for a few minutes before repeating the cycle.

NOTE: The student is not required to use the symbol in order to get the preferred object, activity, or sensory. However, you will stop presenting for a few minutes and then reintroduce. You are teaching the association between the preferred things and the 3D symbol. It may be several weeks or months before there have been enough learning opportunities for the student to use the symbol in any meaningful way.



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Core Sandwich - NOT

First:

Recognize that the student is indicating displeasure or refusal about something that is happening or present.

Next:

Place the 3D symbol for NOT in the student's dominant hand.
Sign NOT hand under hand in the student's non-dominant hand.

Sandwich (link the symbol with her displeasure or refusal in response to an object, activity, sensory input):

Present the object, activity, sensory input that the student is refusing while helping the student move her dominant hand with NOT in it.

Then:

Remove the symbol NOT from the student's dominant hand and place it in the designated area.

Lift the student's hand to brush across the 3D symbol for NOT

Help the student pick up and explore the NOT symbol

Sign NOT hand under hand in the student's non-dominant hand.

Place the 3D symbol for NOT back in the designated area.

Last:

Tap 2x under wrist.

If the student touches the NOT symbol, respond by stopping the presentation of the object, activity, or sensory input.

If the student does not touch the NOT symbol, continue to try to present the object, activity, or sensory input for a minute or so before stopping.

NOTE: The student is not required to use the symbol in order to get the object, activity or sensory input to stop. You are teaching the association between the NOT and the 3D symbol. It may be several weeks or months before there have been enough learning opportunities for the student to use the symbol in any meaningful way.



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Partner-assisted Scanning

Importance

Partner-assisted scanning is appropriate to consider for all students who have complex bodies and limited use of their hands for pointing. Partner-assisted scanning reduces the physical demands of access to the greatest extent possible and allows students to focus more on the act of communicating.

How does it work?

A partner identifies that the student has something to say, and points to and says the name of each symbol, moving from left to right. The partner identifies and responds to a student's individualized way of indicating a selection (i.e., "that's the one I want"). Students may communicate this using a single message voice output device, a body movement, a vocalization or any other means. Students must be taught and have ample opportunity to practice. The partner starts the scan on the first page/location on the system or jumps to a specific page if a likely message is predicted.

How long do you wait after presenting each symbol?

The partner must provide sufficient time for the student to indicate a symbol selection. For some students, as few as 3-5 seconds may be sufficient, but for many others allowing 20-30 seconds will be best. This means the partner says and points to the first word, then silently counts for the appropriate number of seconds while watching closely for the student to indicate a selection.

1-step selection approach	2-step selection approach
The partner is in control of the pace of the scan.	The student is in control of the pace of the scan.
The partner recognizes that the student has something to say and then turns to an appropriate page to start scanning.	The partner recognizes that the student has something to say and then turns to an appropriate page to start scanning.
The partner previews each symbol on the page, pointing to and naming each.	The partner previews each symbol on the page, pointing to and naming each.
The partner points to and says each symbol, one at a time, pausing after each and watching carefully for the student to indicate "that's the one I want."	The partner points to and says the first symbol and then waits for the student to indicate <u>either</u> "move to the next one" or "that's the one I want."
If the student selects a symbol, the adult repeats the word and honors the expression by reacting with a meaningful comment.	If the student selects a symbol, the adult repeats the word and honors the expression by reacting with a meaningful comment.
If the student does not make a selection, the partner moves on to the next symbol.	Partner and student repeat the above sequence to continue communicating.
The partner repeats the cycle (typically 3Xs) and if no selections are made, the partner can model a symbol and move on.	Note: This approach is often easier to learn because students set the pace and get more practice using the behaviors that control the scan and selection.

Universal Core vocabulary partner-assisted scanning format

The [4 Inline Universal Core Partner-Assisted Communication Book](#) is designed to support partner-assisted scanning. The inline format promotes consistency among communication partners as they present the symbol choices from left to right. The format supports both auditory and visual scanning and a high contrast version is available for students with visual impairments.